

CONCLUSION

The Canadian Forces are a vital national institution. Throughout Canada's history, in both war and peace, our men and women in uniform have made a difference—protecting our people and territory, defending our interests and values, and assisting others in need around the world. They have performed these missions while accepting without hesitation the principle of “unlimited liability” and all that entails. They have formed an important part of our national character, helping make us who we are as a people. Our identity, prestige and influence internationally have always been linked to the strength and viability of our military.

In today's security environment, where unpredictability has become the dominant theme, the Canadian Forces have a critical role to play, along with other government departments and agencies, in protecting Canadians. To fulfill this role, they must be effective, relevant and responsive, with the ability to address threats both at home and overseas—whether in the remote regions of our North or in failed states half a world away.

This document has set out a new vision for the Canadian Forces in the 21st century. It calls for a transformed military, with the right capabilities, the right equipment and technologies, and the right command and operational structures and leadership to perform effectively in demanding operations. It will be a fully integrated force, capable of bringing to bear all its resources to produce focused and precise results.

The success of Canada's military will ultimately depend, as it has in the past, on its people—their professionalism, their skill and their training. At home, they will need to be more vigilant and more innovative than ever in defending our citizens and territory against new and emerging threats, while continuing to perform such essential missions as search and rescue and disaster relief. They will rise to this challenge.

Overseas, recent experience in such places as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Haiti has taught us that our military personnel will be called upon to perform wide-ranging tasks, from delivering humanitarian assistance, to separating warring factions, to establishing the conditions—even in the midst of conflict—for the rule of law, democracy and prosperity to take root. To operate in these dangerous

missions, the Forces must first be combat-capable. Only then will they be able to call on their other skills, including the ability to work with local populations. This ability, which inspires and encourages locals to take a direct stake in establishing their own security and stability, makes the Canadian Forces a valuable and much-in-demand commodity overseas.

In performing such roles, Canada's military will be defending our interests and promoting our values. It will also be reflecting and helping build our national character, just as it did in previous conflicts of a different nature. And just as our military did in the past, the Canadian Forces will strengthen our reputation as a country that is committed to finding enduring solutions to global problems.

This defence policy is designed for Canada, for Canadians, and for the men and women of National Defence, both military and civilian. The Government has made major investments in the Canadian Forces, both in terms of people and equipment, to ensure that this policy can be implemented and that the institution can meet the threats of the coming century. By doing so, Canada will also enhance its credibility in the eyes of friends and allies who share the same principles and objectives in pursuit of a better world.

Our military has a long and proud tradition of excellence. This policy will allow the Canadian Forces to continue that tradition. Canadians, and their armed forces, deserve nothing less.

